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Are Drugs A Serious Threat to Timor-Leste?

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“Drugs are an enemy for Timor-Leste, we believe that no one will come to invade Timor-Leste, but the drug has become an enemy of Timor-Leste. If we do not prevent it the country and youth would be broken, and how then would this country will look like” Lere Anan Timur.¹

Introduction

In recent years, reports in the national media have made surprising allegations about operations conducted by the security authority in Dili. The operations' focus is on capturing the heads of the drug trafficking syndicates in Timor-Leste² and has involved various groups either from the upper or middle class and may even include some elites such as: politicians, entrepreneurs, leaders parents as well as security authorities'.³

From the start of 2011 to March 2015, there have been 40 of drug cases pursued by the PNTL of which 22 cases have been processed at court and the defendants found guilty, some are in definitive prison and some are for penalties. These cases involve foreign and Timorese people that either consume, sell and distribute the product across the nation and to neighboring countries, as a result we can see that Timor-Leste has become a *transit* place for drugs.

Fundasaun Mahein's (FM) monitoring that the smuggling of drugs into Timor is done through airport, sea and the land border by networks of organized crime. Sometimes they use other agencies that work by sending and receiving drugs to and from abroad or are sold in the country for internal consumption, the majority of this consumption done by national citizens.⁴

The enforcement of these drug cases can also be quite lax with one such case when a Timorese prisoner escaped from Becora prison in 2013. His location is still unknown but according to rumors, amongst those that knew this man, he is now hiding and living free in Indonesia. There is however not yet any serious actions by Timor-Leste security forces to investigate this rumor or to follow up to try and recapture this fugitive.

¹ Drug is a big enemy for Timor-Leste. Available at: <http://suara-timor-lorosae.com/droga-hanesan-inimigu-bot-tl/>. Access on 24 April 2015.

² Drug has no Limitation, Foster crimes of capital banking. Available at: <http://suara-timor-lorosae.com/droga-la-ih-limitasaun-hakiak-krim-brankamentu-kapital/>. Access on 28 April 2015.

³ Drug is started link with family of politicians in Timor-Leste. Available at: <http://www.temposemanal.com/justisa/droga-hahu-kait-familia-politikus-tl>. Access on 22 April 2015.

⁴Timor Leste in a danger situation for drug transaction and weapons. Available at: <http://www.fundasaunmahein.org/2014/10/16/timor-leste-ih-perigu-boot-ba-transaksaun-droga-no-kilat/>. Access on 30 April 2015.

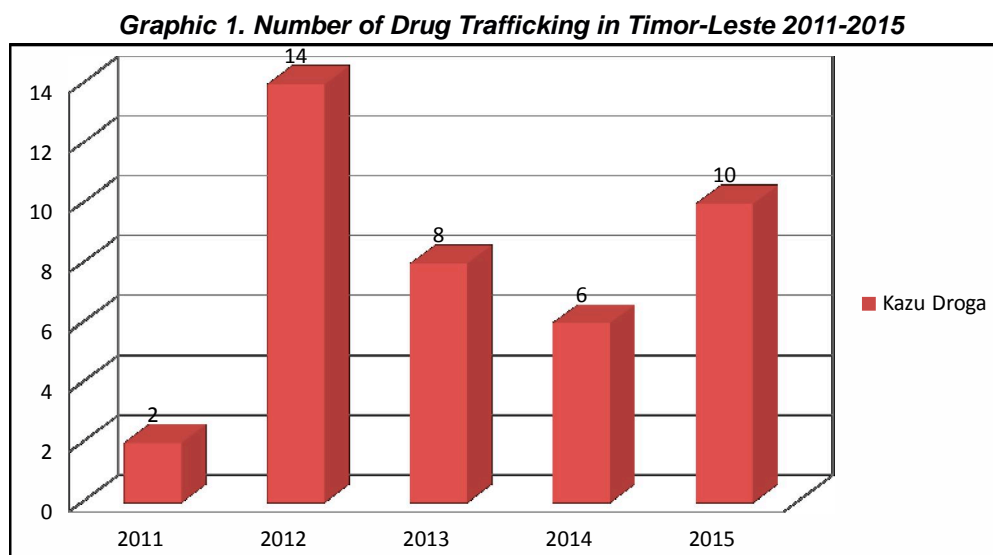
Methodology

The method used in this report is gathering information from media that has been published previously, as well as FM's monitoring outcomes on drugs from 2011-2015. The operation monitoring the security authorities captured in the trafficking in Timor-Leste and the legal process against sending those people to prison. To conclude this report FM uses a method called the *Security Sector Discussion (SSD)*.⁵

The Purpose of this report is to explore the amount of drug trafficking in Timor-Leste. The numbers mentioned in this report comes from FM's monitoring over the last few years, FM believes that this number will become a reference point for the security authorities for further discussion. This report itself has researched the drug's trafficking activities, the alternative of transferring the drug to Timor-Leste and abroad, and lastly about the involvement of national citizens in trafficking narcotics.

The Amount of drug trafficking from 2011 to March 2015

As introduced on the first section of this report, FM has kept a register of cases from 2011 to 2015. It follows the outcomes of FM monitoring of the security authorities operations and publications from national media about the drug trafficking. Following is the number of the registered cases by FM.



Source: The FM's monitoring outcomes from 2011-2015.

⁵ Security Sector Discussion (SSD), is a term used by for discussing, consulting which is involved by all people, students, civil societies, academic and experts in a critical ideas on issue that link with the development of the security sector in Timor-Leste.

These results about drug trafficking in Timor-Leste has created concern amongst the people that drugs are becoming a big threat for Timor-Leste particularly youths. FM believes that cases shown in graphic one (1) does not represent all of the drug cases in Timor-Leste.

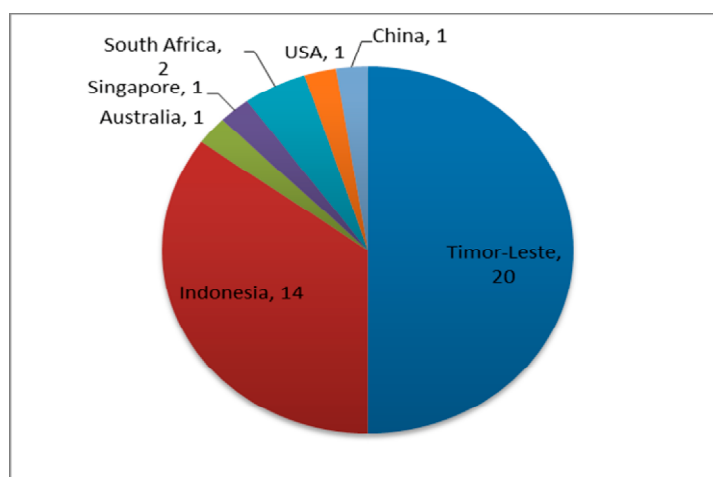
This graphic shows that the drug cases in 2012 peaked with 14 total cases signifying that 2012 was a successful year for the security forces operations, whereas in comparison there were only two drug related cases in 2011. In 2013 these cases increased to eight (8) but in 2014 captured six (6) more of the drug trafficking considers as low number, but numbers of people who involve in drugs are increasing. In 2015 up to March such case has registered ten (10).

FM has identified that these numbers indicate that many drugs are consumed and distributed by Timorese domestically and abroad through the border, sea and port. FM is weary that these numbers may also soon increase due to Timor-Leste's porous borders, with the potential for this country to also become identified as a *transit place* for drugs.

Where are Drug Traffickers coming from?

So where do the members of the international drug trafficking syndicates come from and what markets are they transferring drugs to? A recently reported case has indicated that one such route may be from Africa through to Singapore and then on to Timor-Leste before then transferring to Indonesia. The following graphic shows suspects from different countries captured by the security authorities of Timor-Leste.

Graphic 2. National and Foreign citizens who involved in the drugs trafficking



Source: FM's monitoring outcomes of 2011-2015.

The above graphic shown that Timorese citizens make up the majority of cases with 20 arrests for drugs but can also see that there were: 14 Indonesian, two South Africans, one Australian, one American, One Singaporean and one Chinese citizen. In addition to this the operations conducted by the security services have unearthed tools and equipment used for producing drugs in Timor-Leste itself in order to distribute overseas.⁶

The above graphic shows as well that Indonesian citizens' involvement on drug trafficking is second only to Timor-Leste and may stem from the fact that Indonesia is a neighbor country of Timor-Leste in terms of both border territory and seas. This has given Indonesians the greatest opportunity to import drugs into Timor-Leste due to the weak border controls and porous border.

FM believes that it is because of the weakness and fragility of the security services that Timor-Leste is targeted by these International syndicates. The heads the organized crime syndicates believe that importing into Timor-Leste is a safe option due to the fragility of the security forces and the limited resources at the airport, port and land border in detecting contraband combined with a lack of will to tackle organized crime.⁷

Drug Consumption and Timorese involvement

The following statistics are of Timorese who consumed drugs and have been collected from FM's monitoring of the security authorities who have caught drug suspects whilst consuming drugs

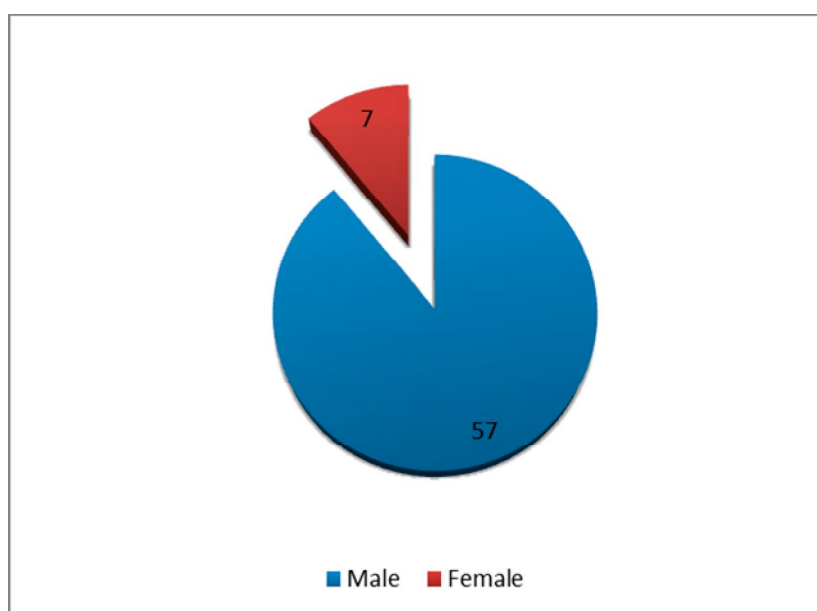
The following graphic will show the amount of Timorese using drugs in Timor-Leste. The graphic will make a comparison between Timorese male and female who are involved in consuming drugs, there are 57 males and 7 females. (Look at the fourth graphic)

The outcome of this research is belongs to FM's monitoring and does not represent all cases of drug's consumed in Timor-Leste. FM considers that those registered cases are cases that have been detected by the security authorities. FM is suspicious however that many cases go unreported or undetected

⁶ Timor-Leste in a danger situation for drug transaction and weapons. Available at: <http://www.fundasaunmaheini.org/2014/10/16/timor-leste-iha-perigu-boot-ba-transaksaun-droga-no-kilat/>. Access on 30 April 2015.

⁷ Lack of Human Resource, TL is Hard to detect Drug inside the Country. Available at: <http://suara-timor-lorosae.com/menus-rekursu-humanu-tl-susar-detekta-droga-iha-rai-laran/>. Access on 20 April 2015.

Graphic 3. Number of people consume drugs in Timor-Leste



Source: The FM's monitoring outcomes of the drugs consumed in Timor-Leste 2015.

The details of the above numbers and the outcomes of FM monitoring that there are 64 Timorese people have been detected consuming drugs (57 males and 7 females).⁸ Even though this statistic shows that the numbers are still in small quantities, the important thing that bears remembering is that drugs these numbers are only representative of those who have been captured by the security authorities and the number of people actually using drugs is very likely to be much higher. It is also concerning that the majority of those using drugs are most likely to be Timorese young people in a very fragile age. According to the UNFPA report on *Drug Use in Timor-Leste – an Assessment*,⁹ research shown that people who are involving in consuming drug are most likely to be 18-23 years old.⁹

With a variety of drug types that can affect people's mental and physical states it is important that this threat is halted before it can start.¹⁰ Certain drugs can have very addictive properties and can make the user dependent on the drug, in worse case scenario's this can lead to a self-destructive lifestyle that harm not only the user but to those around them and society in general.

⁸ FM's monitoring outcomes on drug consuming case through media monitoring and reports from civil societies since up to 2015.

⁹ UNFPA Report on "Drug Use in Timor-Leste – an Assessment". Available at <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/timor-leste/?reports=5408>. Access on 14 April 2015.

¹⁰ Definition of Drug according to Indonesia's constitution of the Indonesia Republic Number 22 1997 over Narcotic. <http://www.dinkesjatengprov.go.id/download/uu/Peraturan-Farmasi/UU-narkotika.pdf>. Access on 14 April 2015.

There have been some incidents as well that show the effect that these criminal syndicates can have on Timor-Leste. FM has identified that the illegal group that attacked a US diplomat at the main gate of the USA embassy were considered to be under the influence of drugs when it happened. ¹¹ This illegal group most likely had connections or had contact with drug trafficking groups from Indonesia. Another report from NGO BELUN discovered that Timor-Leste possess various types of drug which are not well controlled right now. An example of this is The Cornet Flower has been used or for drinking with wine by many youths in some important ceremonies.¹² FM worries that lots of under-ages with a natural curiosity sometimes become involved in consuming these drugs.

The UNFPA report on “*Drug Use in Timor-Leste – an Assessment*” of 2012 shows that there are four (4) main types of drug have been used by people in Timor-Leste, they are: *methamphetamine*, *ecstasy (MDMA)*, *marijuana* and *heroin*.¹³ These drugs are imported, mostly from foreign people, and consumed at bars, discotheque and Hotels in Timor-Leste.

Prisoners who have relation with drug trafficking

In the cases where suspects involved in drug trafficking have been captured and arrested by security authorities it has been through either for the consumption or distribution of narcotics. FM’s monitoring has noted that some drug cases have already been processed at the public ministry and received decisions from a judge, sentencing some of these suspects to a preventive detention whilst others have received penalties.¹⁴

Director of Becora prison João Domingos explained to FM that there are have been 22 prisoners serving out their sentence as a result of drug trafficking in Timor-Leste,¹⁵ these prisoners are from Timor-Leste and also include some foreign citizens. Of these 22 prisoners, however, one was involved in and escaped from prison in 2013 and 5 have been set free. The following graphic is shows prisoners with drug related cases in Timor-Leste.

¹¹ Fundasaun Mahein. (2013). New Form of the Organized Crime Activities in Timor-Leste. Mahein’s Voice Nu. 60. Available at: http://www.fundasaunmahein.org/wpcontent/uploads/2013/10/MNL_Nu.60_03102013_Krime_Organizadupdf.pdf. Access on 20 April 2015.

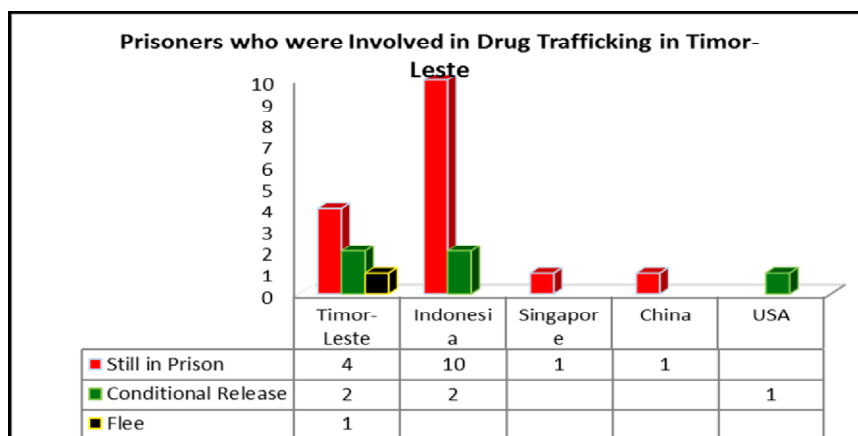
¹² Belun. (2012). Policy Report: Use Alcohol link to Conflict. Available at: <http://belun.tl/relatoriu-politika-uza-alkohol-liga-ba-konflitu/>. Access on 30 April 2015.

¹³ UNFPA Report on “Drug Use in Timor-Leste – an Assessment”. Available at <http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/timor-leste/?reports=5408>. Access on 14 April 2015.

¹⁴ PNTL commander of the criminal investigation service (CIS) informs that within 5 years PNTL has registered some cases, some have been processed by the public ministry, some suspects have been imprisoned to preventive, definitive and for penalties. (Read Independente News 26 February 2015).

¹⁵ Domingos, João. Director of Becora prison. (2015). Private Interview.

Grafiku 4. Prisoners who involved in Drug Trafficking in Timor-Leste.



Source: National Director of the Prison Service (NDPS), 2015

The above graphic shows the amount of prisoners who have been involved in drug trafficking and are currently imprisoned in Timor-Leste; 10 are from Indonesia, 1 from Singapore and 1 from China. They are being detained in either Becora and Gleno prisons. 2 Indonesian's and 1 American caught for trafficking drugs into Timor-Leste have already been set free.

Of the Timorese involved on drug charges, 4 are still detained in prison while 2 others have been set free after serving their terms. One other prisoner, as already mentioned, escaped from Becora prison in 2013 and his whereabouts is still unknown.¹⁶

Conclusion

Timor-Leste does not have a specific law or a clear policy to combat drug's trafficking in this country and faces a big threat from the effects of drugs and the gangs that distribute them. While the numbers of drug cases are remaining steady Timor-Leste faces the threat of criminal syndicates, attracted by the fragile security sector, making Timor-Leste a *transit place* for drugs.

The possibility remains that drugs will continue infiltrate this nation in greater and greater numbers due to the security sectors ability to control and detect the drugs coming into the country through the airport, port and border. This report also asks the question whether there is any complicity by the security authorities in working with drug traffickers.

¹⁶ Speculation of information and bring back the prisoners Juga Gama and Alcino M. Pereira. Available at: <http://www.fundasaunmahein.org/2014/08/18/espekulasaun-informasaun-no-desizaun-ori-fila-dadur-juga-gama-no-alcino-m-pereira/>. Access on 20 April 2015.



FM also would like warn the people of this nation that a majority of Timorese students are now studying at universities in Indonesia, where there is a larger chance they will come across crime groups and may face the temptation of being recruited by them. FM's worries that these students may then come back to Timor and then may try to smuggle in drugs to Timor for the monetary benefits that drug smuggling provides.

Recommendations

- 1 Recommends that the government and the national parliament to accelerate discussion to create a draft law for drug trafficking and consumption.
- 2 Recommends that the government strengthen the integrated control system at the border territory, airport and port with sufficient resources to detect drug smuggling into this nation.
- 3 Recommends that the government strengthen the security information service and investigation into drug trafficking to discover any complex forms of drug smuggling using modern technology.
- 4 Recommends the government to create a national commission for preventing the use of drugs and to convince communities the risks of taking drugs including rehabilitation center for people who have become addicted to drugs.

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